

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO THE CLASSROOM

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined characteristics of two nontraditional teacher preparation programs. Teach for America and the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium were analyzed according to participant selection, length and depth of the program, and teacher performance. Researcher-constructed surveys were administered to eight teachers from each group and to the principals in their schools of employment. The teachers also participated in semi-structured interviews. Results indicated strengths and weaknesses in both programs. It is concluded that preparation in classroom management, clinical experience, and a strong support system are essential for effective teacher preparation

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

By 2011, 2/3 of today's public school teachers will retire, meaning that the United States will need at least an additional 2 million teachers in the next decade. New York City alone will need 10,000 new teachers in the fall of 2003 compared to the 8000 needed the previous year (New York *Times*, 2002, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002). However, the number of college students enrolling in schools of education is declining, and of those who complete such a program, only 60-70% actually go into teaching. Within the first 2 years, approximately 25% of those leave the teaching field, and that number increases to almost 50% by the five-year mark (Tatel, 1997).

Ideally, the level of supply and demand for teachers is in balance at the desired level of standards. "In all other occupations, firms respond to shortages by improving wages and working conditions, rather than by dropping standards" (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1992, ¶ 11). However, with teacher salaries 25% below that of other college graduates (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1992) and with some public schools characterized as failures and often violent, other careers that promise higher status, rapid advancement and larger salaries are more appealing to young people preparing for their futures. In fact, teachers today are rarely praised for their career choice (Johnson, 2000). *The Christian Science Monitor* (2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002) identifies the real shortage as the taxpayers' unwillingness to increase teachers' salaries to appeal to those with the strong teacher qualities and experience; however, a 2002 survey of parents, educators, education policymakers, and other adults reveals 83% support salary increases for teachers even if it means raising taxes. Survey results also show that half the respondents

believe colleges produce good teachers who then leave the field due to money and working conditions ("Do Students," 2002).

Regardless of the causes and the blame, the problem exists and demands immediate attention. North Carolina, for example, needs 10,000 additional teachers annually, and traditional teacher preparation programs are producing only about 1/3 of those, according to North Carolina state officials (Blair, 2003). To address this problem, North Carolina and 44 other states are utilizing teachers from alternative certification programs. The term alternative certification of teachers refers to training and certification received through a means other than the traditional educational college route. Approximately 175,000 teachers in the United States have been licensed through these programs (McBride, 2002). Additionally, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future reports that over 50,000 without training enter teaching annually on provisional or emergency licenses (Haselkorn, 1997). In Wisconsin, for example, the number of teachers with emergency certification rose 20% in 2000-2001 to approximately 2500 (Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002). Areas with poor and minority children are most affected. In fact, students in high minority schools are 4 times more likely to have under-prepared teachers (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1992). In some areas, students have a 1 in 5 chance of being taught by teachers without credentials (Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002).

All of this comes in an era of increased emphasis on teacher quality, performance, and accountability. Although the majority of researchers and 90% of the surveyed public agree that the most important single factor affecting student learning is teacher effectiveness, more studies on teacher effectiveness reveal factors that *do not* impact it

rather than factors that are significant. The traditional hiring criteria--number of degrees, certification status, and years of experience--appear to have little bearing on effectiveness in the classroom (Sullivan, 2001). Other factors that are only weakly linked are pedagogical knowledge and time spent on practice teaching ("Do Students," 2002), as well as number of education courses and scores on professional knowledge sections of licensure exams (Tell, 2000). According to the March 2000 report from the National Academies (cited in Tell, 2000), teacher licensing exams are not designed to show who will be the best teacher.

Of course, many of the qualities of an effective teacher are not easily quantifiable. Characteristics such as inspiration, patience, and enthusiasm that mark a "good" teacher are difficult to measure (Palmaffy, 1999). However, a 2003 report from the Department of Education does identify several factors positively correlated with teacher effectiveness. Teacher's verbal and cognitive abilities and subject matter knowledge are the leading contributors to teacher effectiveness. A study by Goldhaber, Brewer, and Anderson (1999, cited in Sullivan, 2001) adds the selectiveness of undergraduate institution attended as a high positive correlation factor. Also, for many people, the ultimate measure of school effectiveness is "how much and how well the students are learning" (Palmaffy, 1999, p. 29).

The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law January 2002, brings with it a concern for the nature of alternative routes of teacher preparation. An integral part of the Act is the requirement that all teachers of core academic subjects must be fully certified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. According to the Act, "...alternate route and traditionally licensed educators alike, who can demonstrate competency in the subjects



they teach, meet the definition of ‘highly qualified’” (Jorissen, 2003, p. 42). States are given the flexibility to find alternative ways of becoming a teacher. However, the Act also specifies that teachers involved in alternate routes to certification must receive high quality professional development and intensive supervision. They may work as a teacher for a period not to exceed 3 years while making satisfactory progress toward full certification. By the deadline, teachers must have full certification or have passed a teacher-licensing exam and hold a license to teach.

Debate continues on the effectiveness of alternative certification programs. Proponents argue that these programs attract a more diverse group such as retired military, those experienced in other careers, and more minorities (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Also according to *Education Week* (“Report Roundup,” 1998), during the first 5 years of teaching, the retention rate is 5 times higher than that of traditionally trained teachers. This reported statistic seems somewhat inflated when compared to other reports, however. An article in *Investor’s Business Daily* (Duff, 1998) claims that over 80% of graduates from alternative certification programs stay in education for at least 5 years compared to 66% of education school graduates. In North Carolina, the numbers indicate little variance between the two groups. For teacher education graduates, the retention rate is 80% after one year and 67% after two years. For lateral entry teachers in North Carolina, the numbers are 75% and 54% respectively (The University of North Carolina, 2003).

On the other hand, those who oppose alternative certification say that participants are provided only a limited view of the curriculum, they lack the understanding of student ability and motivation, they lack the training to be effective planners, and they have

difficulty relating knowledge to the students in a meaningful way (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Most importantly the participants do not receive actual time in the classroom as they would in a student teaching situation ("Alternative Routes," 2002). "Substandard alternative teacher certification programs that try to prepare teachers quickly for the rigors of the classroom fail to produce qualified teachers and shortchange students" (Berry, 2001, ¶ 1).

"Although increasing dramatically in number, there are currently no standards for assessing alternative certification programs" (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002, ¶ 54). Across the country, programs range in length from a few weeks to one year ("Alternative Routes," 2002). They range from graduate-level teacher education programs using responsive and varying delivery methods to short-term approaches, programs that reduce the requirements for a state license to emergency hiring practices with very few guidelines (Berry, 2001). Most require formal mentoring but the formats vary ("Alternative Routes," 2002). "The large variability in alternative certification programs makes research on this phenomenon difficult" (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002, ¶ 54). Only 10 states even know the amount of money being spent on these programs. According to The National Center for Education, 12 states have exemplary alternative certification programs, but even these programs are flawed. The program, for example, may require a mentor but not necessarily a trained one (Berry, 2001).

### Purpose

The objective of this research, however, is not to advocate alternative certification as superior or even equal to certification resulting from traditional teacher preparation programs. Rather, acknowledging the existing shortage of teachers, especially in rural

and urban areas, the focus of this study is on the successes and limitations of alternative certification programs. One such program, which began in 1990, is Teach for America. Through this program, recent college graduates who are non-education majors are placed for two years where teacher shortages are at emergency status (Tatel, 1997). Following a training session in the summer, these recruits seek to use what they learned from successful teachers and incorporate it into teaching students in rural and urban areas.

North Carolina is one of the program's partners with slightly over 100 corps members serving in five counties within the state. Eight Teach for America participants served the two high schools in Halifax County, North Carolina in 2002-2003. During that same academic year, Halifax County hired a number of lateral entry teachers (those who hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than education) who taught full-time while taking courses toward teacher certification. The majority of these teachers participate in the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium, a state-funded program that provides affordable and accessible classes for lateral entry teachers seeking full certification. At the beginning of the school year, members of both groups attended a weeklong county orientation for new teachers.

All participants in the study are uncertified, initial teachers with minimal or no student teaching experience. Other constants in the study include holding a bachelor's degree and having had few, if any, education courses while in college.

All factors indicate that alternative certification is becoming increasingly utilized and accepted. Analysis of two different programs will provide input on the aspects of such programs that are correlated with producing well-prepared teachers. Analysis of participant selection and the actual training process will add to the knowledge base about

the characteristics that make an effective program. Because programs across the country vary widely and are not always carefully monitored, research on program effectiveness will be influential in the field of practice as far as setting guidelines and providing on-going evaluations of such programs.

The purpose of this study then is to analyze the effectiveness of the Teach for America program in Halifax County, North Carolina and North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium, the program used by other alternatively certified teachers in the same area. For the purpose of this study, program effectiveness is defined according to participant selection, length and depth of preparation, and participant performance as reflected by student end-of-course (EOC) scores, where applicable, and principal survey responses. The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of two existing programs will lead to a better understanding of the characteristics essential to any effective nontraditional teacher preparation program.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Explanation of Problem

No longer are classroom teachers only trained through traditional educational routes. With the incorporation of alternative certification as a pathway to teaching came the problems of teacher quality and consistency of program standards.

### General Shortage

Factors contributing to the present shortage of traditionally prepared teachers in the United States have included an increase in student enrollment, an effort to lower class size to improve scores on standardized tests, and a surge in teacher retirements (Boston *Globe*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002). Additionally, a high attrition rate among educators has quickly depleted the field of trained personnel. Nationally, only 60-70% of education graduates have actually entered the teaching field, and of those, 15% have left after 1 year in the classroom and another 10% after 2 years (Tatel, 1997). The Southern Regional Education Board estimated that approximately 1/2 of new teachers in the Board's 16-state area will either leave teaching in the state where they started or totally leave teaching within 5 years (Lexington *Herald Leader*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archives, 2002). Urban areas have reflected an even higher teacher attrition rate (Sullivan, 2001).

### Effects

One immediate effect of this shortage has been an influx of unqualified personnel. Four million students per year have been taught English, math, or history by teachers without majors or minors in their subjects (Palmaffy, 1999). The National Commission

on Teaching and America's Future (1996) reported 12% of new teachers entered their first jobs without any training. Over 50,000 people who lack training for their assigned teaching jobs have entered annually on emergency or substandard license. In certain specialty fields, the number of uncertified has not been limited to novice teachers.

These numbers were even more alarming in inner city and low-income rural areas. Although thousands of new teachers have been prepared yearly by schools of education, the needy schools were chosen by a relative few. Suburban positions were the most popular. Only 15% of education school graduates preferred teaching in urban areas; the number was even less for rural schools (Tatel, 1997). Slightly more than 1/4 of students in the U.S. attended rural schools, and this number was even higher in some states like North Carolina where 55% of the student population was rural (U.S. Department of Education, Retrieved August 27, 2003).

Some researchers have argued that the shortages have been exaggerated, have only been in a minority of schools, have been limited to certain fields such as special needs and to certain geographic areas, or a combination of these. Indeed the highest rates of teacher shortages have been in schools characterized as urban, impoverished, high minority population (who may or may not be non-English speaking), low achieving, or all four. Ingersoll (2000) stated that out-of-field teaching might have been due to a principal's hiring decisions and management. He believed that out-of-field teaching has been common because it was permissible, convenient, and less expensive and time-consuming than the alternative. While this may have been true, the fact has remained that the number of teachers being trained in university teacher preparation programs was far less than the predicted number of teachers needed in the future. Teacher education

programs were on 1,025 U. S. campuses, preparing an estimated 100,000 potential teacher graduates annually, but this was only half the number of teachers needed (Sullivan, 2001). Also, indications that a school system had filled every teaching position did not necessarily mean all positions were filled by certified or qualified teachers. In 1993, although less than 1/10 of the nation's high schools had trouble filling English positions, approximately 1/4 of all English teachers were uncertified in that subject. Some schools were able to fill every position with a fully certified and qualified instructor, but thousands of schools across America were not that fortunate (Ingersoll, 2000).

#### Requirement Variations

The issue has been further complicated by the wide variations in state requirements. Some states such as Connecticut had rigorous requirements for licensing, but others allowed a broad range of hiring procedures. A 1996 study by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future found that some state certification standards were lax and that many employed teachers failed to meet minimum requirements set by a state board of education (Sullivan, 2001). Even the terms 'certification' and 'licensure' varied in their meanings from state to state; in some cases, they were used interchangeably. Nationwide, over 25% of newly hired teachers entered the profession without having fully met state licensing standards. Twelve percent of new teachers were hired without any license, and 15% held temporary, provisional, or emergency licenses (Bradley, 1999).

Researchers and education experts have been divided on the subject of teacher certification and licensure. One side has insisted licensure "provides a quality-assurance mechanism" (Bradley, 1999, ¶ 5). Typically, traditionalists have believed teaching

became a trade rather than a profession without certification. Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) pointed out that someone “without a law or cosmetology license would be committing a crime if caught practicing law or working in a hair dressing salon. No such legal protection is afforded the public when it comes to education” (§ 9). Advocates for continued state licensure requirements have been further concerned because it has been the less successful schools and less successful students who have been the most likely ones to encounter unqualified teachers. “Assigning uncertified substitutes to low-scoring kids who face high-stakes tests should be illegal,” said Kati Haycock, head of the Education Trust, a Washington, DC research and advocacy group (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002, § 9).

However, in 1983, *A Nation at Risk* raised questions about the common assumption that a graduate from a teacher education program who had passed the licensing exam, if state required, was a “qualified” teacher (Sullivan, 2001). Concern has continued to grow over the value of state licensing exams and the effectiveness of traditional teacher education programs. State licensing exams have been criticized because of unchallenging content, low “cut-scores,” and only Pass or Fail score reports (Sullivan, 2001).

#### Traditional Education Programs

Traditional education courses, also a target of criticism, have often been described as unchallenging, having a low marketability outside of teaching, and not insuring job success (Klagholz, 2001). Gross (2000) described the education curriculum as narrow and eccentric. Teachers themselves ranked education courses as one of the least important contributors to job competence (Chaddock, 1998). The National Center for Policy Analysis reported a study that revealed 56% of new public school teachers



criticized their preparatory programs for emphasizing educational theory rather than practical classroom strategies (Henry, 2000). In fact, beginning teachers ranked student teaching and the support of their mentor teachers as the best preparation tools and ranked education methods courses and education philosophy classes as the least helpful (Newman & Thomas, 1999).

According to Matthews, (2002, cited in Kerr & Berliner, 2002), there was:

...no evidence that lengthy programs achieve [their] goals any better than streamlined programs that quickly get talented teachers into the classroom.... Requiring excessive numbers of pedagogy or education theory courses acts as an unnecessary barrier for those wishing to pursue a teaching career. (¶ 26)

The 2002 report by the Secretary of Education supported this line of thinking. It theorized that “highly able students are repulsed by the rigidity of teacher training programs combined with these programs' lack of intellectual rigor” (“Do Students,” 2002, ¶ 5).

#### Attracting and Retaining Teachers

One major explanation for the lack of American young people selecting careers in education has been low salary (*Daily Yomiuri*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002). In a survey of college graduates, 80% agreed that teachers were seriously underpaid. The average teacher earned approximately \$42,000 after 16 years experience. An analysis reported in *Education Week* (Johnson, 2000) revealed that teachers between 22 and 28 earned roughly \$8000 less than their fellow college graduates. By age 44, the gap between teachers and others with master's degrees was \$32,511. Other inhibitors were poor work environments, barely literate students, apathetic parents, and unsupportive administration. State-mandated testing and concerns over school violence were additional barriers. A survey of college graduates showed 89% believed that teachers often had to worry about personal safety (*Daily Yomiuri*, 2001, cited in Bellwether

Archive, 2002).

Addressing the interests and desires of potential employees was essential if teaching was to be competitive in the job market. Johnson (2000) reported that the job values held by prospective teachers differed considerably from those of veteran teachers with close to 30 years of experience. During their employment, the near-retirement group was characterized as having respect for administration, desiring job security, valuing autonomy over teamwork, de-emphasizing the importance of salary, opposing differential treatment among teachers, tolerating isolation, having little interest in advancement, and shunning competition. Prospective teachers, by contrast, were lured to other jobs by teamwork, risk-taking, variety, money, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Johnson (2000) proposed five key suggestions for what was needed to attract and retain teachers today. She recommended: 1) organizing schools to promote teamwork and interdependent work; 2) encouraging teachers to assume varied responsibilities and leadership roles such as piloting new programs, team teaching, writing grants, etc.; 3) increasing the salaries of all teachers but also providing differentiated pay for expert teachers according to their roles and effectiveness; 4) refocusing teachers' unions to become "progressive agents of change rather than protectors of the status quo" (§ 15); and 5) providing a variety of routes for preparing teachers. Many people wanted to explore this career field before making a long-term commitment; therefore, schools needed to have programs in place to support, train, and evaluate participants in the various pathways.

#### Characteristics of Alternative Certification Participants and Programs

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future believed that the most

important strategy for improving education was the “blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America’s schools” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future [NCTAF], 1996). Since 1999, the recruitment and preparation have included alternate certification programs in over 40 states (Tell, 2001). According to Tell (2001), “...today’s education workforce requires more, not fewer, pathways into teaching” (p. 41).

Most teachers today still entered the field with a degree in education from an accredited program with a portion of their training being supervised student teaching. However, an increasing shortage of traditionally prepared teachers has led the majority of states to incorporate new ways to certify teachers. The first alternative certification program began in Virginia in 1982. New Jersey, Texas and California quickly followed. As early as 1998, it was estimated that over 80,000 individuals had been licensed through such programs (Feistritzer, 1999). These programs have caused widespread controversy as well as ignited a new research field.

In addition to teacher shortages, Dill (1996, cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999) listed the academic quality of individuals entering the teaching profession and the growing criticism of current traditional teacher education practices as contributing factors to the increase in alternative certification programs. Some states may have also been motivated by the desire to recruit from underrepresented groups or from other professions. Traditionally certified teachers were more likely to be white, middle-class, and younger than those who were alternatively certified. The percentage of males and minorities was higher in alternative certification programs than in traditional ones (SRI International, 2000). In Texas, for example, 43% of the alternatively certified were minorities while

they made up only 9% of the traditionally certified (Chaddock, 1998). It was predicted that by 2020, 40% of the K-12 population would be minority students. A number of studies validated the importance of teachers as role models, especially if they were from the students' own cultural group (Newman & Thomas, 1999). In comparing the two types of programs, Stoddart (1990, cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999) described the traditional programs as more rigorous academically, and the alternative programs as lengthier in multicultural education. However, alternative certified teachers scored slightly higher than those from education schools on licensing exams, according to education experts (Duff, 1998).

Alternative certification has not only provided a more demographically representative pool than traditional programs but, according to some researchers, also has attracted participants who had higher expectations for both the poor and the advantaged student and were more willing to teach in urban schools. These interns with "life experiences similar to students treated all students more fairly and tended not to categorize students' abilities on the basis of race or wealth" ( Stoddart, 1993, cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999, ¶ 44). Alternatively certified interns were also more supportive of performance-based pay, career ladders, national entrance exams, and market-driven pay than their traditionally trained counterparts (Feistritzer, 1990, cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999). Feistritzer (1992, cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999) described them as supportive of national standards and a national curriculum. He reported that when asked their key reason for teaching, 69% of those in alternative programs gave the importance of education to society as their answer, compared with only 32% of traditionally trained teachers who gave that as their response.

However, Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) reported that traditional teachers had more self confidence and sense of efficacy than those prepared alternatively. Teacher preparedness led to teacher efficacy, which in turn led to teachers continuing in their careers. From his 1990 study, Haberman (cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999) reported that successful teachers, no matter their preparation method, had a “strong sense of personal identity, good support system and universal high commitment to the job of teaching” (§ 46).

Some teacher preparation programs such as Teach for America has recruited recent college graduates for a two-year commitment. Others have offered training for those seeking a career change. Programs varied in both length and depth. SRI International (2000) reported, “The many programs defy classification. Internships, for example, are not the same from state to state, and states that allow for internships often have universities that, in turn, create additional requirements” (Part IV, § 14). Often concurrent with their own training, participants were assigned students and thus entered the classroom without certification. In New Jersey, for example, the contract required that for the first thirty weeks the new employee attend after-school training and be mentored and evaluated by a district staff member (Klagholz, 2001). Whiting and Klotz (1999) said that such designs put “novices into shark infested waters with the expectation that they will be able to navigate and survive, without harming either the students or themselves” (§ 8).

According to the research group SRI International (2000), when viewed nationally, few teachers have received license through alternative programs. Texas and California, the two states with the greatest involvement in alternative programs, reported that alternatively certified teachers accounted for 15% and 5% respectively of their total

teacher workforce. These percentages, however, did not include those teaching on emergency permits. Existing programs for emergency certification often lacked mentors, financial assistance for required courses, and common coursework with peers.

Feistritzer and Chester (1996, cited in Cleveland, 2003) classified a number of alternative certification programs types presently implemented in the United States. Class A was designed to bring in individuals who were talented and had a bachelor's degree in a non-education field. In 1998, 28% in new teacher programs began teacher preparation with a bachelor's degree, and of those, 36% had some type of teaching-related experience such as substitute or teacher's assistant (Feistritzer, 2001). This classification did not specifically result from the teacher shortage. Class B had the same recruitment as Class A plus mentoring and formal instruction and was restricted to teacher shortages, certain high school subject areas, or both. After an individual's professional and academic background was reviewed, he received specialized in-service and training to attain the competencies required for a Class C certification. This determination primarily lay with state and local districts. Class D was the same as C except colleges had the main responsibility. A person also possibly participated in a post-baccalaureate program based at a college to obtain a Class E. Class F was an emergency program implemented by local school districts. A participant taught but received less support than a Class A or B person. A Class G was for the person who had few requirements left to be certified through a traditional college teacher-education program. Examples included an education minor and a person certified by another state or in another content area. A person with very specialized qualifications such as teaching only contemporary Southern literature or the writings of Pat Conroy received a Class H. Feistritzer and Chester (2000, cited in SRI

International, 2000) acknowledged difficulty collecting data due to 30 different initial teacher certification titles and over 50 state titles for the second stage of certification.

Two primary forces appeared to be at work in education today that were not in previous generations. One was the insufficiency in the number of students completing traditional education programs. This coincided with a growing school-age population. The other force was the trend in today's society for people to work later in life and to be more open to career changes than ever before. One way in which these factors have worked together was the creation of alternate pathways to teaching.

#### The Need for the Study: Evaluating Alternative Certification Programs

Despite philosophical differences and criticisms of alternative certification, it has been an ever-growing resource for placing teachers into classrooms. Because these programs have been impacting the education of America's children, it was imperative to examine them. Few published evaluations solely on alternative certification existed, and those that did usually had only anecdotal information and citations of related evaluations, whether positive or negative. Existing evaluative publications were usually comparisons of traditional and alternative rather than large-scale or program-specific studies (SRI International, 2000). According to Dill (1996, cited in Newman & Thomas, 1999), the fact that alternative certification programs were developed to meet a variety of needs has made it difficult to determine a common set of evaluative criteria. He recommended that each program be evaluated on its own merits. One key question has been whether programs should be evaluated on outcomes such as student achievement or on goals such as improvement of teacher quality and quantity.

Berry (2001) recommended five criteria for an effective alternative program. It should

last 9-15 months, include class work in academics (content material and child and adolescent psychology) and pedagogy (including teaching strategies and assessment strategies), meet all state standards, include the same tests and requirements for certification that are found in traditional teacher programs, and provide field experience. Internship or student teaching should be under direct daily supervision of an expert teacher. Similarly, Jorissen (2003) characterized an exemplary alternative program as lasting 9-15 months with strong work in pedagogy and academics and a minimum of 30 weeks with an expert teacher in the classroom. Added to these components were the suggestions that candidates go through the program, not in isolation, but in cohorts and that the programs be collaborative efforts between state departments of education, colleges and universities, and school districts (Feistritzer, 1999). According to Delia Stafford, president of National Center for Alternative Teacher Certification Information, despite the thousands of graduates from alternative programs and the existence of such programs in over 40 states, not all were “true” programs. She further defined true programs as those that were "crafted and designed to ensure that adults do not practice on children while taking university courses. The programs are developed with school districts, so interns have time to learn the craft of teaching, designing lessons, managing a classroom, and so on" ("Alternative Routes," 2002).

Based on evaluative readings of existing alternative certification programs, Hawley (1992, cited in SRI International, 2002) established 10 questions to be used as criteria for judging program effectiveness:

- (1) Can alternative certification substantially reduce the use of temporary certificates as a strategy for addressing teacher shortages?
- (2) Do alternative programs attract to teaching persons with needed qualities and interests who would not otherwise have become teachers? These needed qualities and



interests include: intelligence, subject matter knowledge, gender, maturity, race, ethnicity, and commitment to students.

(3) Because certification occurs in the context of teaching and is determined by professional teachers and administrators, does alternative certification serve as a more effective mechanism for screening out prospective teachers than do traditional certification programs?

(4) How long do people who receive alternative certification stay in teaching, in comparison with persons who enter teaching through traditional routes?

(5) How do alternatively certified and traditionally certified teachers differ with respect to the lessons about teaching they are taught?

(6) How effective are traditionally certified teachers, in comparison to alternatively certified teachers, in facilitating student learning?

(7) What effects do alternative programs have on traditional programs?

(8) What effects do alternative programs have on the participating schools' and districts' commitments to and support of the continuing professional development of teachers?

(9) What are the relative financial costs of alternative certification to taxpayers and to teacher candidates?

(10) What effects do alternative programs have on the professionalization of teaching? (Part IV, para. 60)

Results of interviews of participants reveal two important characteristics of a successful program. First, it provides participants with an accurate feel for what the actual teaching experience is like, and secondly, it incorporates consistent monitoring to ease the burden of the initial teaching experience.

#### Shortcomings of Alternative Certification Programs

A two-year study by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future identified the existence of eight barriers to the goal of providing every student in America with a caring, qualified teacher in a successful school. Several of these barriers meshed with the concerns for teacher preparation programs--both traditional and alternative. The identified barriers included low expectations of students, lack of enforcement of teacher standards, flawed teacher preparation, haphazard teacher recruitment, inadequate instruction for beginning teachers, a lack of rewards for knowledge and skills, lack of professional development, and schools that were organized not for success but for failure

(NCTAF, 1996).

Although these barriers were found among traditionally certified teachers as well, research indicated a greater likelihood as a result of an alternative program. In fact, Berry (2001) identified four myths relating to alternative programs. The first myth was “Teachers need only a knowledge of subject matter, so shortcut alternative programs can adequately ready teachers for teaching” (§ 11). This overlooked essential teaching skills such as motivating students, acknowledging diversity, and presenting material to students so that lessons are understandable. Secondly, Berry said the belief that “Alternative licensure attracts high quality teachers to the field” (§ 13) was a myth. National data on over 14,000 alternatively certified teachers indicated that more had lower educational accomplishments than traditionally trained teachers. They also received a higher proportion of out-of-field teaching assignments. Myth three was “Alternative licensure produces more effective teachers who, in turn, produce higher student achievement” (§ 15). Although there was some data supportive of the statement, the data was small, random, and inconsistent. Finally, Berry (2001) identified as a myth the belief that “Shortcut alternative preparation programs are just as likely to recruit teachers who will stay in teaching” (§ 18), saying that in actuality, of the teachers who left by the third year, 30% were traditionally trained, 10% were prepared by an extended five-year teacher education program, but 60% were through alternative means. “Some studies show that the teachers in alternative routes to certification have high drop-out rates from both the programs of instruction and from actual teaching” (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy (2002, cited in Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002, § 57). However, according to the National Center for Education Information, within the first 5 years of teaching, alternatively

certified teachers had 5 times the retention rate of traditionally trained teachers ("Report Roundup," 1998). Conflicting statistical reports like these abound, pointing to the need for researchers to carefully examine this issue if we hope to create ways to better train teachers who enter classrooms.

Those who participate in alternative programs also expressed some concerns for shortcomings within the programs. The majority of participants were challenged by classroom management issues. Sokal, Smith, and Mourat (2003) concluded that classroom management was the most common concern for pre-service teachers, and teachers who had classroom management problems were the most likely to leave the profession. A survey of school administrators revealed only 44% say that new teachers (alternatively and traditionally prepared) had the skills for maintaining an orderly classroom, and 68% of those administrators faulted the programs of preparation for failing to adequately teach discipline techniques (Henry, 2000). Some alternatively certified teachers felt unprepared in terms of lesson plans. They acknowledged their lack of organizational skills and admitted that they did not know how to plan ahead. Participants also pointed out that instructors, fellow teachers, and administrators sometimes took for granted that they were familiar with and had a clear understanding of the "language of teachers." Participants expressed a need to observe as well as teach and to have at least a semester of full-time supervised teaching. If they only participated in a summer school program, they did not have a fair assessment of "regular school."

#### Advantages of Alternative Certification Programs

Many retired military personnel and adults seeking a career change have had the potential to become outstanding teachers. Thus alternative certification programs

increased the number of qualified personnel who otherwise would not have gone into teaching, providing some relief for teacher shortages. In fact, approximately 150,000 nationwide entered from previous careers into teaching through this route in 2001 (Indianapolis *Star*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002). Often financial assistance and cohort group support were available. These programs also allowed candidates to take classes while working, offering more innovativeness and flexibility than traditional programs. Numbers indicated that older individuals and minorities found these programs especially appealing.

#### Teach for America

One program that has been growing nationally is Teach for America. This organization has been considered a national one, not because it was operated by the federal government but because it utilized a national recruitment strategy. It began in 1990 as the brain child of Wendy Kopp, a Princeton University student. Her goal was to “provide a pipeline of future leaders with the insight and commitment to effect broad-based social change” (*Teach for America: About Us*, Retrieved 2003, ¶ 3). Much of the program’s initiation was made possible by philanthropic donations of \$2.5 million. Since then TFA has relied on private and cooperate grants (SRI International, 2000). In 1993, Teach for America spent approximately \$12,000 per recruit (Darling-Hammond, 1994). During the organization’s first year, 500 participants were selected from 2500 applicants. These applicants represented 100 colleges and a variety of academic majors. Twelve years later, the number of applicants had risen to 14,000. By 2004, the organization has planned to have 4000 teachers placed in 23 areas in the United States (Tell, 2001).

TFA explained this growth as a “response to a grassroots recruitment campaign...that

has tapped a wellspring of idealism throughout the country” (*Teach for America: About Us*, Retrieved 2003, ¶ 2). One of the organization’s focuses has been the inequities faced by children in low-income areas. TFAers listed as their top three reasons for selecting the program: a desire to work with children; a lack of other options; or indecisiveness at the time (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). In reference to America’s educational needs, Kopp (1994) said there has been a “pressing need to develop better strategies for recruiting and selecting a diverse and talented pool of teachers, for developing them into effective professionals, and for assessing whether they meet standards of excellence” (p. 187). She recommended that school systems launch aggressive recruitment campaigns, establish an effective system for selecting individuals with potential, and ensure all receive guidance from expert teachers and have access to resources and collaboration. States should grant a license only when the performance is equal to standards of excellence.

Thus far, Teach for America has placed 9000 participants who have worked with 1.25 million students. The selected college graduates have committed to two years of service in urban and rural schools in one of 18 locations, an increase of 12 from its first year. TFA has only placed participants in areas where teacher shortages were at emergency measures and has left an area once an adequate teacher supply became available. Although these areas have usually been avoided by professional teachers, TFAers have *expected* placement in such places. Participants identified their preferred regional sites, grade levels, and subject areas, and according to Teach for America, 90% were placed in one of their highly preferred sites. Their students were usually poor, and the schools were characterized by the chaos and uncertainty often associated with poverty. Approximately 60% of the participants worked in elementary schools. School districts employed TFAers

through alternate routes to teacher certification. Because of this, many corps members have taken courses after their teaching began. Some programs allowed them to obtain master's degrees also. During employment they were paid directly by the school districts and typically received the same health and insurance benefits as other beginning teachers. Salaries ranged from \$22,000 to \$40,000 (*Teach for America: How It Works*, Retrieved 2003).

Teach for America has carefully recruited and selected its participants. Kopp, in an attempt to make the program more attractive, designed it to be competitive. Many participants have been from selective colleges. For example, in 1996, 34 graduates from the University of Michigan, 22 from the University of California at Berkley, 21 from Miami University in Ohio, 19 from Northwestern, and 17 from Georgetown, 16 each from Stanford and Cornell, 15 each from Yale and the University of Wisconsin, and 14 from Harvard were chosen. While in college, 80% were active in campus organizations with 65% holding leadership positions. McBride (2002) characterized them as a diverse group. Approximately 40% were people of color and 35% were males. According to Kopp (1994), Teach for America has looked for strong communication skills, flexibility, leadership, initiative, and realistic expectations. Recruitment criteria included personal interview, written references, written essay, sample lesson taught, and discussion group participation.

Once participants had been chosen for the upcoming school year, they attended a five-week training institute, staffed by expert teachers and teacher educators. SRI International (2000) reported that the training program was derived from standards-based associations, including the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education

and Certification (NASDTEC), National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS), and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC).

During the five-week institute, recruits taught in a local summer school program daily from 8:00-1:00. Their afternoons were filled with learning sessions on the following topics: Teaching as Leadership; Instructional Planning and Delivery; Classroom Management and Culture; and Literacy Development. The evening schedule included planning meetings with team teaching groups of four in preparation for the next day's lessons and mini workshops of choice on topics such as behavior modification, organization, and cross-curriculum projects. Once TFAers were placed in their assigned locations, they attended the district orientation to familiarize themselves with local policies, culture, etc. (*Participant Manual*, 2002).

Teach for America has also coordinated a network to provide support during the two years of service. Typically recruits have been placed in schools with other corps members, alumni, or both. Visits from local staff at least twice a semester to observe and debrief, newsletters, and monthly all-corps meetings were part of the support system. Evaluations of participants were completed at the end of the institute, at the end of the first year of service, and at the end of the second year. These were done through the use of portfolios, video tapes, self-evaluations, and panel reviews from educators and students. Nationally, 96% of the TFAers completed their first year of commitment, and 83% completed both years (Tatell, 1997). These rates were encouraging, especially when compared to the attrition rates of 25-50% typical in the areas served by TFA (SRI International, 2000).

According to Teach for America, they have tried to address some of the immediate

education problems, believing that in the long run, solutions require fundamental changes both in and out of education. The organization hoped that their alumni would be advocates for these changes. Statistics on Teach for America alumni of 1990-1992 reflected that although members had only a two-year obligation, many continued to be active participants in the education community. Four years later, in 1996, 46% of these alumni were still teaching, 7% were in graduate schools of education, and 11% were working in organizations related to education (Tatell, 1997).

The Teach for America program has not been without its critics. Stevens and Dial reported that researchers found “a majority of TFA teachers chose to join the organization because they did not know what else to do after college” (1993, cited in SRI International, National Program section, para. 3). In Laczko-Kerr and Berliner’s research (2002) on the effectiveness of Teach for America, they concluded:

TFA may be a meaningful way for young college graduates to make some money and take a few years out of the ordinary path their careers demand. But they are hurting our young, vulnerable, inner-city students....Because an overwhelmingly high percent of the TFA students also leave the profession after their two years of service, their hard earned teaching experience will never be put to use with future generations of students. (Discussion and Conclusion section, ¶ 11)

Linda Darling-Hammond expressed belief that alternative certification weakens the teaching profession and has been one of the leading critics of the TFA program. She asserted that several unwarranted assumptions undergird Teach for America. First was the assumption that subject matter knowledge and general intelligence were the only necessities for a successful teacher. Darling-Hammond (1994) argued that preparation in learning theory, child development, and curriculum development was more important. She feared the shallow training led TFAers to see teaching as an “endeavor focused primarily on simplistic activities and routines” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, ¶ 65).



Although Kopp said teacher preparation made little or no difference to teacher effectiveness and that teachers were made through experience, Darling-Hammond pointed out that they might not learn the ‘right things’ from experience. They needed guidance to interpret and to relate to a knowledge base in order to make informed decisions. Kopp assumed that districts can and will train mentor teachers on their own, while Darling-Hammond contended that university-based teacher preparation was a necessity.

Additionally, Tell (2001) criticized Teach for America for inadequate training and for the maximum two-year commitment, arguing that participants needed to stay longer to make a difference in schools that were already vulnerable. Initially TFA training was set up so that corps members received five weeks of training, 19 days of which were spent student teaching in summer school. During this time, support directors only observed participants twice during practice teaching and for a single lesson each time. Each observation also included a 10 minute pre-conference and a 20 minute post-conference. The observation form contained no specific observation criteria (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Robert Roth, (1994, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1994), a TFA summer institute evaluator, described the 1993 Teach for America summer institute as one-hour workshops in dorm lounge areas. Recruits chose any or no workshops, and the workshops were neither cumulative nor connected and therefore were lacking in depth. Former TFAers with three or fewer years of teaching experience ran the resource rooms. The institute had no required readings, homework, or follow-up. Participants spent an average of less than 30 hours in workshops. According to Roth, the training could be compared to “poorly thought-out adolescent summer camp” (¶ 63). Darling-Hammond reported that

four separate evaluations of the training program showed failures in the preparation of TFAers. These evaluations criticized weaknesses of inadequate practice or theory, limited training, lack of evaluation, and placement of poorly trained people in the poorest schools (1997, cited in Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). According to Darling-Hammond (1994):

Quite frankly, their [TFA's] public documents reveal no conceptual framework or structured organization for the curriculum. There is no sequence; there is no scope; there is no sense of what a teacher needs to know about the teaching/learning process. The outcomes-based standards are not translated into criteria that delineate what to look for. (§ 61)

Michael Shapiro (1993), who tracked the program during its first year, reported that the most common concern from the Teach for America members themselves was that “no one had explained to them what to expect in the classroom” (p. 74). Of one TFA teacher, Shapiro (1993) interviewed, he said, “...her hasty preparation never gave her the chance to experiment in her method and approach before she stepped into a classroom. Now, the necessary trial and error happens before the impatient audience of her students” (p. 62). This lack of preparation made the teachers less able to plan and less likely to foresee potential learning difficulties of students. They were also less sensitive to the differences and needs of various students than teachers who were traditionally trained. Not enough information and training were provided during the summer program, leading to feelings of hopelessness and frustration later in the classroom. Dropout recruit Chris Ashford (1994, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1994) said, “They [TFA] think that youth and enthusiasm will outweigh experience and knowledge” (§ 94).

Darling-Hammond (1994) reported that cooperating teachers and support directors shared some of her concerns. They too reported seeing a need for more training time in the classroom, more help designing lessons, more familiarity with the curriculum, more

knowledge of pedagogy, and better foundations in child and adolescent development and in teaching theories. The corps members tended to emphasize rote learning and worksheets. Brown (1994, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1994), who was responsible for supervising 54 TFAers, said, “I saw teachers struggling out there. They were out on a limb with no place to go, and Teach for America did nothing” (¶ 42). Darling-Hammond and Wise also criticized the organization’s philosophies, monetary issues, and “overall disregard for children” (1994, cited in SRI International, 2000, National Programs section, ¶ 4).

A 1990-1991 study of the program, conducted by Popkewitz (1994, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1994), raised strong criticism about the training related to multiculturalism provided in the program’s first year. Based on observations of this training, as well as interviews and classroom observations, Popkewitz reported distinctions made between children of color and “the normal child who succeeded in schooling....The child of color became the ‘other’: the one who lacked the motivational attributes, behavioral characteristics, and self-esteem to achieve” (¶ 33). A former support director for TFA in New York, Kisha Brown (1994, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1994) also noted criticism of racial insensitivity. Although not a direct counterargument to these accusations, TFA founder and director, Wendy Kopp did acknowledge that over the past decade Teach for America had experienced a steep learning curve. Presently, much of their training program has focused on strategies to help eliminate the achievement gap between students in low-income areas and those in more privileged areas. An awareness of national statistics such as children of low-income areas being three to four grade levels behind by age nine has led to an emphasis on the need for high expectations and

maximum use of class time (Kopp, 2000).

Perhaps the largest concern has been due to the sparseness of outside evaluations, therefore leaving the debate over Teach for America corps members' qualifications to continue. Darling-Hammond (1994) cited the reflections of former TFAers, Margaret Carmody and Tim Bucciarelli, who served in Washington, D.C.:

"I know we're learning a lot," Carmody noted midway through her very difficult first year. "But I wonder how much good we're doing the children. Are they suffering because they have inexperienced teachers? I worry about that." Bucciarelli concurred: "I don't think I'm what they need. Every classroom in schools like these needs an experienced teacher." (§ 45)

Although limited in number, independent evaluations of the Teach for America program existed. One of the few studies on the Teach for America program was conducted by The Center for Research in Education Outcomes (CREDO), a research group based at the Hoover Institute of Stanford University. They used 1996-2000 data from the Houston Independent School District, a system of 210,000 students, making it the seventh largest in the US. The goal of the study was the first independent evaluation of Teach for America's teachers' effect on student performance. The study design included three groups--TFA, all other new teachers, and all experienced teachers--and used test results on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Evaluators' findings revealed that on the average, TFAers had a positive effect. The results showed a stronger positive impact in mathematics than in reading. Also, although the results were always positive, the difference between the average TFAer and the average non-TFAer was not statistically significant. Finally, when compared to teachers entering from another route, Teach for America teachers were characterized as having less variation in quality. Therefore, Teach for America teachers may have been less risky and more

consistent as potential employees. When compared to other teachers recruited the same year, TFAers were more likely to have a bachelor's degree, more likely to be placed in difficult classes, and less likely to leave after the first year. Many stayed beyond their two-year commitment. CREDO concluded that Teach for America has been a "viable and valuable source of teachers" (*Teach for America: About Us*, Retrieved 2003, ¶ 7).

Other evaluative criteria have also been used. Kane, Parsons and Associates, Inc., 1995, 1996, cited in Tatel, 1997) found, "Data accumulating about TFA teachers' classroom effectiveness describe high satisfaction among superintendents, principals, parents, and students" (¶ 9). Based on a 1996 survey of 46 superintendents by the same organization, Tatel (1997) reported that 91% "rated corps members as at least as good as both beginning teachers and the overall teaching faculty in their own school districts, and 99% of the superintendents reported satisfaction with corps members' overall contribution to their school districts" (¶ 10).

Similarly, a study by Kane, Parsons, and Associates in August 2001 asked principals to evaluate 23 key indicators of effective teachers. These included qualities such as classroom management, knowledge of subject matter, curriculum planning, motivation, and dedication to teaching. In 90% of the evaluations TFAers were rated good or excellent (*Teach for America: Why*, Retrieved 2003). Data from the 1996 surveys indicated that of the 287 principals responding, 75% said TFAers had more impact on their students than other novice teachers. Principals wanted teachers who were positive role models, had strong academic backgrounds, and maintained high student expectations. Despite corps members having only weeks of training and field experience, many principals were requesting more teachers than Teach for America was able to

supply (Tatel, 1997). In interviews of 524 principals in the Houston Independent School District, Teach for America recruits were described as energetic, highly motivated, committed to students and other teachers, intelligent, creative, and knowledgeable of their subjects. In fact, the greatest weakness reported was that corps members typically only stayed two years (*Teach for America: About Us*, Retrieved 2003).

Parental opinions have been basically positive also. Tatel (1997) reported that in a survey, which did not identify which staff members were members of Teach for America, 80% of the responding parents rated TFAers higher than all other teachers in areas such as improving basic skills, explaining materials, and motivating students. Ninety-six percent of the surveyed parents said that those teachers involved them in their child's education.

Tatel (1997) cited studies from both Kane, Parsons and Associates in 1996 and from Feistritzer, also in 1996, showing that students rated corps members as better than other teachers (not just other new teachers) in a dozen skill areas. In addition to ability to teach, motivation, and subject matter knowledge, students also included willingness to help outside of class.

Much of the success and positive feedback for Teach for America participants has been attributed to their personal and intellectual characteristics. Typically described as resourceful, creative, enthusiastic, and motivated, TFAers set high standards for themselves and for their students. In their schools of employment, among their extracurricular activities were organizing clubs, writing grants, constructing websites, and coaching athletics.

Having an entrepreneurial spirit, TFAers "seek out solutions and are goal-driven"

(Tell, 2001, p. 38). “Part of their intelligence is to be analytical, to find solutions” (Peria & Zepeda, 1997, cited in Tatel, 1997, ¶ 29). When considering school input variables, Ferguson and Ladd (1996, cited in Tatel, 1997), “identified teacher test scores as the most powerful correlate of increased student test scores” (¶ 22). For TFAers, the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score was 1205 and the average college grade point average (GPA) was 3.3. “Knowing that smart, hard-working students who become teachers are more likely to produce smart, hard-working students is important because districts need to know what characteristics to value when hiring teachers” (Tatel, 1997, ¶ 24). A study in 1983 by Feimer-Nemser (cited in Tatel, 1997) found:

Well educated, knowledgeable teachers can fall back onto strong academic patterns and high expectations for content, performance, assessment, and involvement. Teachers with weak learning histories inevitably rely on weak skills, shallow knowledge, and less effective performance patterns. (¶ 25)

According to Tatel (1997, cited in Chaddock, 1998), director of teacher education at American University in Washington, “Teach for America is a black sheep for ed schools. It’s not ideal, but it’s very effective. And it’s getting teachers where they’re needed” (¶ 23).

#### Lateral Entry Teachers in North Carolina

Teach for America has not been the only alternative route available to potential teachers in North Carolina. In addition to the traditional practice of earning a bachelor’s degree from a school of education or transferring with a teacher certification from another state, a person has been able to obtain alternative licensure based on previous work experience. The largest growth recently, however, has been in the pathway known as lateral entry for people without certification and without an educational degree. Over 1/3 of North Carolina’s teaching candidates have come through a program for lateral

entry. Employed as classroom teachers, they also took education courses at night, on weekends, and during the summer.

General eligibility requirements included a bachelor's degree from a regionally-accredited college or university, a GPA of 2.5 or the successful completion of the Praxis I test and a GPA of 3.0 in either the major area of study or in coursework completed in the senior year or on at least 15 semester hours of classes related to the teaching subject area and completed within the past five years. Once they secured employment of an appropriate teaching position, they were issued a lateral entry license, initially for 2 years. They were able to receive a re-issued license annually for up to 3 more years for a total of 5 years. A teacher employed as lateral entry must have completed at least 6 semester hours of course work annually. Also they must have met the Praxis II testing requirements before the end of the second year (The University of North Carolina, 2003). Participants identified having few chances to prepare for the classroom before the first day of school and arranging courses at colleges and universities as two of the main hurdles associated with the process (Raleigh *News and Observer*, 2001, cited in Bellwether Archive, 2002).

North Carolina has had one of the fastest population growths in the United States in addition to an increase in non-Native English speaking students from all economic levels (The University of North Carolina, 2003). In recent years, the state has needed to hire 10,000-12,000 new teachers annually, and NC colleges and universities have only been producing 3,000-3,500 new teacher graduates. Of these, only 67% accepted teaching positions in North Carolina (Ward, 2003). The North Carolina Education Research Council reported 3,100 lateral entry teachers enrolled in courses, 1,800 taking positions



in North Carolina, 1,350 or 75% remaining after one year, and 1,000 or 54% remaining after two years (The University of North Carolina, 2003). Both of these avenues may be affected by the No Child Left Behind legislation, which in addition to requiring all core academic teachers to be fully certified in their teaching area by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, also requires teachers who are a part of any alternate program to complete the program within 3 years.

#### North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium

The University of North Carolina (UNC) system had 15 teacher education programs. Additionally the system served several centralized programs for teachers seeking an alternative pathway. Key areas of focus for these services were advising, program delivery, information, and support. One of these programs, the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium (NCMTEC), was established in 1989, and it became part of the Center for School Leadership Development in 1999. Working in collaborative partnership with 44 different school systems in the state, the Consortium has sought to make available affordable and accessible education. The partnership has grown to include 27 community colleges and 10 four-year colleges and universities, both private and state institutions. Participants applied to colleges or universities and met the requirements for admission there. Then in turn, they sought support from NCMTEC, which has been funded by the General Assembly and by the Board of Education in each partnering county (who paid one dollar per average daily membership). During 2002-2003, this program served 664 lateral entry teachers in 619 schools (The University of North Carolina, 2003).

One primary service of the consortium has been to sponsor college undergraduate

classes for lateral entry teachers. These were offered at a reduced tuition of \$80 per course with the Consortium paying the tuition balance. Classes were taught by instructors from four-year colleges and universities but held at nearby community colleges. Some courses were also offered online. The credit was from the four-year college, and they accepted credits from one another. Participants had to be employed by one of the participating school systems and a pay stub was required for verification (Allen, 2003). These reduced rates were utilized by 534 teachers in 2002-2003. NCMTEC also provides a third-party billing that enabled the teachers to take college-transfer classes at a community college for \$60 with another \$60 allotted for the textbook (The University of North Carolina, 2003).

Regional Alternative Licensure Centers, located in Charlotte, Fayetteville, and Nashville, opened in the April 2002. Their role has been to evaluate applications and prescribe an individual course of study. These centers were established by the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to help lateral entry teachers achieve full licensure and to work closely with NCMTEC. Acting as a service agent, NCMTEC has sought to provide support and information to persons new to the teaching field who may have little if any general knowledge about North Carolina's licensure process. Prior to this, lateral entry teachers received plans of study from a particular college's teacher education program, which often resulted in inconsistencies across the state.

Acceptance has been on a first-come, first-serve basis. When all available monies were allocated and all available classes were filled, all other applicants had to be denied for that particular time period. The Executive committee has been considering other

possibilities such as limiting the number of courses per year one takes in an effort to serve more people. Over 2200 lateral entry teachers have participated in NCMTEC. African Americans have made up 44.9% and Caucasians, 48.9%. This represented a much higher rate of minority teachers than was produced by teacher education programs in the North Carolina college system, where the rate was 21% (Allen, 2003).

In addition to affordable and accessible courses, NCMTEC has also offered seminars in Praxis I and II preparation. Both of these tests are components in the standard test requirement for a teaching license in North Carolina. The Praxis I, a pre-professional skills test on reading, writing, and math was needed if the lateral entry teacher did not have a 2.5 or higher GPA from undergraduate work. NCMTEC offered these seminars for \$20 each. Praxis II contained specialty area tests and was required to complete the program of study in teacher education. This preparation seminar was available for \$80 (NCMTEC, Retrieved 2003). These workshops were particularly valuable considering the 60% attrition rate within the first three years of teaching because of failure to pass the Praxis II (Allen, 2003). Often lateral entry teachers have been overloaded with teaching responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and state-required coursework that may interfere with test preparation (Blair, 2003). The seminars helped provide theory background and alleviated some of the fears associated with the test. During 2002-2003, NCMTEC-sponsored seminars were attended by 196 lateral entry teachers (The University of North Carolina, 2003).

NCMTEC has had obvious advantages for lateral entry teachers. Classes were affordable and accessible. The Consortium provided continued advisement and support. They arranged for representatives from the colleges and universities to come to

registration. Because participants were already teaching, registration for classes was held on Saturdays or in the evenings. Teachers were kept informed through fliers, the NCMTEC website, and contact persons. Often teachers from one locale or district were part of a cohort, thus enhancing support and teamwork even more.

One negative aspect associated with the Consortium has been that their services were contingent upon funding from the General Assembly. Also scheduled courses were based on availability of instructors from participating colleges and universities, in addition to the needs in the region. Participants were juggling the time needed to prepare for each day in their own classrooms while balancing 1-2 college-level classes. However, the disadvantage with the most serious repercussions was the practice of putting people in the classroom with no prior educational training and usually no related experience. Although not a formal evaluation, basically NCMTEC has been continually evaluated through the General Assembly's involvement in funds allocation.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Rationale

Because research revealed a lack of a concise, agreed-upon definition of program effectiveness, it was necessary to clearly delineate the criteria used. Drawing upon conceptual and empirical research, questions were developed to guide the methodology of this study and create a working definition of program effectiveness.

### Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to identify the characteristics of an effective alternative certification program for teachers by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the Teach for America program in Halifax County, North Carolina and the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium, the program primarily used by other alternatively certified teachers in the same area. At this stage in the research, program effectiveness was defined according to participant selection, length and depth of preparation, and participant performance as reflected by student end-of-course (EOC) scores and principal survey responses. The case study was limited to the eight Teach for America recruits and eight other beginning lateral entry teachers employed in Halifax County secondary schools during the 2002-2003 school year.

### Overarching Question

Based on analysis of the Teach for America preparation program and the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium program, what characteristics were essential to an effective nontraditional teacher preparation program?

## Ancillary Questions

### A. Participant Selection

1. What eligibility criteria were used by the participant's preparation program?
2. What was the educational background of participants?

### B. Preparation

1. What was the length and depth of the training programs?
2. How much of the training program was related to pedagogical coursework?
3. How much of the training program was related to content area?
4. How effectively did the training program prepare the teachers for the classroom?

### C. Performance

1. What were the principals' assessments of the participants' classroom performance?
2. What were the North Carolina EOC scores (where applicable) of each group?
3. What were the future educational goals of each group?
4. What were the career goals of each group?

## Definition of Program Effectiveness

At this stage in the research, program effectiveness was defined according to participant selection, length and depth of preparation, and participant performance as reflected by student end-of-course (EOC) scores and principal survey responses. Any program has only been as strong as its participants. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of a teacher preparation program, the criteria used for participant selection was

significant. Several studies linked teacher scores on standardized tests, especially the verbal ability section, with subsequent student achievement (e.g. Hanushek, 1971, Webster, 1988, & Ferguson, 1991, cited in Sullivan, 2001). Also the quality of a teacher's undergraduate institution had a positive correlation with student achievement levels (e.g. Winkler, 1975, Summers & Wolfe, 1977, & Ehrenberger & Brewer, 1994, cited in Sullivan, 2001). Because deep content knowledge was essential for all teachers, the number of classes a person took in the subject he/she was teaching was an influencing factor. Student performance was better if the teacher had a major or minor in the field; this was especially true in mathematics and science (e.g. Monk, 1994, Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999, & Wenglinsky, 2000, cited in Sullivan, 2001). For the purpose of this study, quality of participant selection was measured by Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), undergraduate institution, and number of college courses in the subject taught.

The second measure of program effectiveness was the length and the depth of its educational experiences. Critics of alternative certification programs cited limited overview of curriculum, lack of understanding of student motivation, problems with planning and time management, trouble relating knowledge to students in a meaningful way, and classroom management as challenges not often met through these programs (Lazcko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Training programs that addressed these areas have typically provided a strong foundation for teachers. According to Haberman (1991, cited in Cleveland, 2003), standards of excellence for teacher preparation included quality faculty, a meaningful curriculum that taught teachers to teach, and frequent program evaluations. Sustained intensive mentoring also insured smoother transitions for interns into their own classroom experiences. For the purpose of this study, the effectiveness of

the program was categorized according to preparation thoroughness in the following areas: curriculum overview, student motivation, lesson planning, time management, teaching strategies, and mentoring support.

Thirdly, the effectiveness of the training program was reflected in teacher and student performance. Sullivan (2001) defined a quality teacher as one “who can foster the academic growth of all children and provide them with the means to achieve their full potential” (p.11). In a study using value-added assessment data developed for Tennessee, Sanders analyzed the influence of teacher effectiveness on achievement levels. Low-achieving students made 3 times greater gains with quality teachers, and high achievers gained 12 times more percentile points when taught by the most effective teachers as compared to the least effective. For average students, those who gained an average of 10 percentile points were instructed by the least effective teachers, and those taught by the most effective teachers had an average gain of 35 percentile points (Sullivan, 2001).

In addition to student test scores being an indicator of teacher performance, principal evaluations provided an on-site look at performance. These on-going evaluations were not limited to the structured formal observations using the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI) but also included informal observations, feedback from students, parents, and other staff, and professional demeanor, all of which enabled the principal to assess teacher performance.

### Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to study the effectiveness of lateral entry teachers from Teach for America and from the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium (NCMTEC) in a selected county in the state of North Carolina. This



interpretative study focused on the experiences of the 16 participants. This approach enabled me to gather objective data from several sources and also to solicit personal responses of participants through interviews. Because a person's initial year of teaching is a roller coaster of emotions, I felt that talking with each participant individually was essential if I were to have a true picture of their sense of preparedness and support.

Survey results from participants' principals (see Appendix A: Principal Survey) revealed information on teacher preparedness and performance. Participant survey responses (see Appendix B: Questionnaire for Participating Teachers) and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participating Teachers) were used to gather information on educational background, characteristics of teacher preparation programs, and class average EOC scores, where applicable.

### Demographics

Geographically, Halifax County was the third largest county in North Carolina. The major job opportunities in this rural area were farming and logging. With an unemployment rate of 12%, almost twice the national average, the majority of its 5900 students were eligible for subsidized lunches. The school system included 16 schools, approximately 6200 students, and almost 400 full-time teachers. It operated on an annual budget of \$49 million (Blair, 2002).

The two high schools in the county had similar demographics and performance status. Northwest, with an enrollment of approximately 900, was 84% African American, 10% American Indian, and 5% Caucasian. Fifty-two percent of the students received free or reduced lunch, and the proficiency rate school wide in 2001-2002 was 39%. Southeast had a student population of approximately 700, of whom 98% were African American

and 1% was Caucasian. Sixty-five percent received free or reduced lunch, and the proficiency rate for the same year was 27.2% (GreatSchools.net, Retrieved 2003).

Proficiency rates were determined by a school's overall scores on North Carolina EOC tests. Proficient indicated that a student scored at a level 3 or 4, meaning he or she was at or above grade level.

The county has faced an on-going teacher shortage, in part due to being a low-income area and having a high attrition rate. In fact, 45 new teachers were needed at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year in the two high schools alone. One of the schools experienced a loss of 42% of its faculty. With such a high attrition rate, establishing any consistency and carrying out meaningful and substantial reform were major challenges. The beginning teacher salary in Halifax County was \$25,500, considerably lower than the average of \$29,786. In 2002-2003, for the first time, teachers there received a \$500 supplement, but this was almost insignificant compared to signing bonuses of up to \$3000 as well as additional perks offered by other districts in North Carolina and in neighboring states (Blair, 2002).

### Sample

In order to alleviate some of the teacher shortage problem, administrators have often hired lateral entry teachers. In North Carolina, teachers who have obtained a college degree in an area other than an education degree in the subject they were teaching were labeled lateral entry teachers. They held a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, with little or no educational coursework. Among lateral entry teachers in this study were some from the program Teach for America, an alternate route to traditional teaching available only in certain urban or rural parts of the country. Beginning in the

2002-2003 school year, Halifax County, North Carolina was one of the rural areas served by this national program. Other lateral entry teachers employed in Halifax County were working toward certification through the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium. Eight of these teachers remained employed by the school system this year and agreed to participate as part of the case study.

My case study focused on 16 participants, eight from each program. Sampling strategies included being able to make comparisons of some criteria while holding others constant. All 16 teachers were uncertified and employed as first-year teachers by Halifax County in 2002-2003. Each held a college degree but did not complete a teacher education program. Thus purposeful sampling enabled concentration on analysis of specific characteristics that contributed to being a quality teacher.

#### Data Collection

Teach for America provided a list of their participants who were employed at Southeast High School and Northwest High School. Because Teach for America only served in the secondary schools in the county in 2002-2003, other participants in the study were also selected from the two high schools. The two schools provided a list of first-year lateral entry teachers in 2002-2003 who were still employed at one of these secondary schools. To protect the anonymity of the informants, Teach for America participants were labeled A-H, and the others were labeled 1-8. After signing consent forms, each of the 16 completed a survey (see Appendix B: Questionnaire for Participating Teachers) and participated in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participating Teachers). Additionally, the principals at each school completed a survey (see Appendix A: Principal Survey) relative to each

participant. Both sets of surveys utilized a Likert scale, and on the principal survey, some terms were reversed in order to avoid response patterning. The participants provided their scores for SAT or entrance exams, educational background, and class averages on EOCs.

In much of the literature, three criteria for teacher quality were experience, salary, and certification. In an effort to study characteristics other than these, I selected participants who were identical in these three areas. All 16 were in their first year of teaching, on the same salary level, and lacked completion of the certification process. With these qualities being equal between the two groups, I could focus on other characteristics. I used participant selection, length and depth of training, and classroom performance to provide a composite picture of the effectiveness of each program. These three criteria were addressed in some form through statistics, surveys, and interviews.

Data collection took place during September 2003. Individual interviews were scheduled for approximately 30 minutes during a teacher's planning period or after school, and I recorded interview notes. In an effort to put the respondents at ease and to gain their trust at the beginning of the interview, I asked permission to record notes on teacher responses; and at the conclusion, I reread the answers, asking the respondent to make any corrections or additions to my notations. I assured them of the confidentiality of their information. Of the seven participant interview questions, one related to educational background, five to preparation program (overview of curriculum, lesson planning, time management, teaching strategies, and mentoring), and one to future goals. Interviews were conducted prior to the surveys in an effort to establish rapport and a sense of trust with the participants.

Teachers and principals then completed survey forms. All nine questions on the participant surveys related to skills and training gained through the preparation program. The principal survey of 12 questions addressed preparation (6), verbal skills and content knowledge (2), and professionalism (4).

### Data Analysis

Analysis began by my reading survey results and interview notes to get a sense of the data. I tabulated survey responses by assigning a number value to each answer choice on the participant survey. Tallying and then averaging each group's responses to individual questions enabled me to analyze participants' perceptions of their program preparation. Results from the principal surveys were categorically disaggregated to classify assessment in specific areas. Then the same type of calculations was done on the principal surveys, again enabling me to view preparation from another perspective.

As I reread interview notes, I constructed a matrix of information related to participants' educational background, EOC performance, and future plans. The most revealing information came from document analysis of interview notes, however. By coding certain repeated words and phrases found in interviewees' responses, I noted clear areas of concern such as "mentor," "time," "stress," and "discipline" from both groups. However, some of the data was unique for the Teach for America group. This was in various ways related to "school culture." When I completed the coding process, chunks of data were sorted and arranged according to certain themes that emerged from the analysis of patterns. Triangulation of the statistics, participant input, and principal input led me to the conclusion that members of both groups believed that their preparation for the classroom would have been greatly enhanced by clinical training such as student

teaching with an emphasis on classroom management and student behavior and consistent support through a built-in mentoring piece. I then identified these as characteristics essential to an effective nontraditional teacher preparation program.

Once my preliminary findings were drafted, four co-educators agreed to participate in a peer review to help insure trustworthiness. An additional verification procedure was member checks. I asked three of the participants to read my results to ensure that I had interpreted clearly and represented their comments fairly. Each of them agreed with the findings, and we informally discussed ways these educational issues could be resolved or at least improved in the future. Although not all three of them planned to remain in the classroom, all have demonstrated a love and concern for the students they taught and an interest in improving the education system.

#### Limitations

Providing equal representation of the literature was a limitation. While an ample amount was available on the Teach for America program, information on the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium was not as readily available. Also the nature of the programs varied in such a way that some aspects of comparison were difficult. A few of the Teach for America participants actually took classes through the Consortium.

Participants of the study were limited to secondary teachers and were employed at one of the two county high schools. Sample size was limited by the fact that only eight Teach for America recruits were employed in the county during the year of the study. Because sample size was small, it was difficult to generalize the results. Also all participants did not teach classes with EOC tests, making comparison of student achievement only

partially possible. Focusing on a county that had Teach for America in elementary or middle schools would enable more thorough comparison of student test scores. A pilot study would enlarge the sample size and expand the number of factors to be analyzed.

Research was based on evaluation of one program that was relatively small and on Teach for America participants in only two partnered schools. One barrier to definitive outcomes was that some of the data gathered was based on teacher/administrator perceptions. The increased use of quantitative as well as qualitative methods in future studies would enhance our understanding of teacher preparation programs and their effectiveness.

The current study yielded preliminary findings requiring further investigation. Longitudinal studies that follow teachers from preparation through their careers would provide a more complete picture of the role of teacher preparation programs in teacher retention and student performance. Such studies could also focus on assessing the long-term effects of alternative certification programs on schools and on traditional teacher education programs. Finally, longitudinal studies could measure the impact of the current alternative certification trend of bringing an increasing number of males and minorities into the teaching profession.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### Participant Selection

One criterion used to evaluate program effectiveness was participant selection. The Teach for America (TFA) program proved to be the more competitive and selective of the two alternative certification programs. Approximately 12,000 candidates vied for 2000 positions nationwide. Requirements for participating in the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium (NCMTEC) was a bachelor's degree, acceptance by a partnering college or university, employment by a partnering school district, and available funding for the program.

A reported indication of a quality teacher was the individual's test scores on a college entrance exam. According to Palmaffy (1999), having a teacher with strong math and verbal skills improved student performance. The 2002 report from the Department of Education recommended assessment of verbal ability as part of the new teacher preparation and certification model. Analysis of documents revealed that seven of the eight Teach for America participants had available SAT scores with an average of 1419. Four of the NCMTEC participants had available SAT scores with an average of 965. When asked about the teacher's use of correct grammar and clear communication, the two principals indicated strongly agree for each of the eight of the TFAers and strongly agree for three of the participants in NCMTEC, agree for four and undecided for one.

The academic reputation of the teacher's undergraduate college or university was used as another indicator of teacher quality. The colleges and universities represented by the



Teach for America group included University of Wisconsin, University of Colorado, Indiana University, Mt. Holyoke, Smith College, Yale University, Shaw University, and University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Seven of the eight participants in the Consortium graduated from schools within the state, and for the most part schools were smaller and less prestigious than those attended by the TFA group. Overall, the more prestigious schools may have afforded greater academic opportunities, higher credentialed instructors, and more variation of experiences. Colleges and universities represented by participants in NCMTEC included Virginia State University, Fayetteville State University (2), University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, North Carolina Wesleyan, North Carolina Central University, Elizabeth City State University (2). One member of this group also held a master's degree from Washington University.

The Department of Education's 2002 report included content knowledge as a proposed requirement in the new model. Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) found that a teacher's knowledge of subject matter decreased student rates of failure. This study used the number of undergraduate courses in the assigned teaching area as a measurement of content knowledge. Only three of the Teach for America teachers had a major in their assigned subjects. The other five had 15-27 semester hours in their areas. This compared with two teachers from NCMTEC having majors in their teaching field, one with a minor and the other five having a minimum of 15 hours. Therefore, the difference noted on this characteristic of the two programs was not statistically significant.

#### Length and Depth of Preparation

Participants in NCMTEC began the program simultaneously with entering the classroom as a teacher. Once the participant was a part of the Consortium, the number of

classes required hinged on transcript evaluation by the Regional Alternative Licensing Center. Halifax County Personnel Director also worked closely with the Center by notification of upcoming courses that were a part of individual blueprints. Total courses needed by participants in this study ranged from three to nine. Some of the classes taken during the year of the study through the Consortium by the eight participants included Foundations of Education, Classroom Management, Reading and Writing in the Content Area, Educational Theory and Practice, Methods and Materials, Educational Psychology, Exceptional Children, and Media and Technology.

Through interviews, participants indicated that many of these courses were taught by well trained instructional staff and the content proved to be useful. Although most classes were held at local community colleges, the majority of the professors were from Chowan College, North Carolina Wesleyan College, Elizabeth City State University, and North Carolina Central University. Participants were most critical of the courses taught online, citing meager and ineffective responses from the professors as a weakness. A positive reported was the formation of cohorts, which enabled some participants to share problems, concerns, and ideas.

No student teaching experience was a part of NCMTEC since participants were already involved in an actual teaching assignment. Members of the group cited student motivation, behavior management, and planning as the most challenging aspects of their initial year in the classroom. Each of these areas would have been addressed through student teaching if the supervising teacher was thorough and effective. As one participant put it, “Nothing can prepare you for standing in front of 25 kids although student teaching would help.”

NCMTEC participant survey results indicated that the only area in which they felt very well prepared was North Carolina Standard Course of Study. They felt moderately well prepared in each of the other seven areas. These included classroom management, teaching strategies, planning and pacing, student assessment, incorporation of technology, diverse student needs, and record keeping/extra duties.

It should be noted that the only prior classroom preparation for those in the Consortium was the local county's one-week orientation for all new teachers, which then also included the eight Teach for America recruits. The orientation provided information related to local rules and policies, No Child Left Behind, and classes needed for certification. Also if Teach for America participants intended to obtain a North Carolina teaching license, they were eligible to take classes through the Consortium although few in the study had done so. The training they received at the Teach for America Summer Institute qualified participants for six credit hours toward North Carolina certification.

The Teach for America program utilized a five-week summer training or institute. The modules were Teaching as Leadership, Instructional Planning and Delivery, Classroom Management, and Literacy Development. Participants described the instructors as "outstanding," "focused," "goal-oriented," and "effective as role models." For four weeks of the program, participants worked in learning teams of four, preparing and presenting lessons in summer school in the Houston, Texas school district. The learning teams were a part of a larger group of 12-16 that was assigned a corps member advisor (CMA). Part of these teaching experiences included continuous observations and feedback. Lesson plans were required to be specific and turned in daily to the CMA. Participants described the Institute as "incredibly intense, thorough, and impressive."

One TFAer spoke of the motivation resulting from the concentrated energy and collaboration of 1000 people all with the same goal. Most reported surviving on 4-5 hours of sleep, but all felt the intensity was necessary as a preparation for the intensity of the classroom. Although they taught one 50-minute class daily for four weeks, one recruit commented that it was a big adjustment to go to three 90-minute classes daily, in addition to other school activities. As one TFAer said, “The grueling schedule of Institute was easier than this [teaching].” Still the majority of the TFAers interviewed recommended lengthening the Institute. Based on the accounts of these eight participants and the Teach for America Participant Manual, the program had been greatly broadened and intensified since its initial years when TFA drew criticism and was described as a “summer camp.” Results for surveys given to the TFA case study participants indicated they felt most prepared in the areas of student assessment, teaching strategies, and planning and pacing. Response averages did not indicate being very well prepared in any of the eight categories, however. Results showed moderately well prepared for classroom management, North Carolina Standard Course of Study, needs of diverse students, and integration of technology. Participants felt only somewhat prepared for record keeping and extra duties.

Mentoring was not a part of the Consortium experience so participants received mentoring only from the person assigned by the school. Each participant was assigned a trained mentor from within the school. Evaluation of this was broad in range. Two felt they got no support from their assigned mentor, two got support but were somewhat handicapped by the mentor not being in their subject area, two described the mentoring process as fair, and two described it as an invaluable help.

Teach for America had a mentoring piece as part of its design. The state's program director, a former TFAer and trained mentor, visited, observed, and provided feedback for the TFA teachers once or twice a semester. One advantage of this process reported was it provided an "avenue to vent." Although the majority of participants felt the organization did a good job with the mentoring, two reported that it "could be strengthened." Each of these teachers was also assigned a mentor within the school, but only two described that support as good or even fair. Another support provided through TFA was All-Corps meetings, held every 1-2 months. There recruits met on Saturdays and received further training on topics such as how to write grants. They also worked in learning teams to share ideas and plan units related to their content areas.

Findings related to program evaluation on length and depth were somewhat ambiguous. The student teaching piece and the Institute class work in the Teach for America program offered strong advantages. However, participants in both programs were required to take additional classes, which provided pedagogical skills. Also participants in the NCMTEC felt better prepared overall as reflected by the surveys. Neither program was designed to provide training in content areas.

#### Teacher Performance

One means of evaluating teacher performance was through student performance. Although not all 16 teachers in the case study taught courses with state assessments, a majority in each group did. Fifty-two percent of the students taught by the six Teach for America recruits with end-of-course (EOC) tests scored on or above grade level on the specified tests. For the other lateral entry teachers (five with EOC's) in the study, 26% of their students were proficient on the tests. Overall, the higher scores were for those

students taught by Teach for America members. However, a major trend of importance was that each of the 11 teachers with EOC's had an increase in the number of students who scored on grade level the second semester; some even doubled the first semester number. Familiarity with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and as little as one semester of actual classroom experience strengthened their teaching skills and performance.

Principals were also asked to assess the teachers' performances through a survey. In nine of the ten categories reflected in statements related to positive performance, Teach for America participants received strongly agree responses. Teachers in the other group had no category where the average of responses was strongly agree. Instead each of the ten categories showed agree as the average response. These categories related to content knowledge, effective planning, teaching strategies, pedagogy, and the overall school environment. On the statement that the teacher was challenged by discipline and classroom management, the average principal response was disagree for TFAers and undecided for the other participants. Finally, responses received on the statement that the teacher had difficulty adjusting to the school culture, TFAers received an average score between disagree and strongly disagree. Participants in NCMTEC received an average response of disagree. Results indicate that in all 12 of the categories, members of Teach for America received slightly higher evaluations.

Of most importance were the three themes commonly heard during the research process. The leading theme throughout the interviews of participants of both programs was the importance of support. A strong mentoring program was recommended as a mandatory part of any preparation program. Mentoring programs within the schools did

not always operate as they were designed. But it was really more than this. Several respondents told of a lack of general support from fellow teachers and administration. One teacher said, “The problem is not with the students but with other staff members not being supportive.” Regardless of any reasons fellow workers might have for this, the resulting feeling certainly intensified the struggle for survival new teachers often experienced.

In addition to a lack of support, but somewhat related to it, was the sense of frustration with the education system (both broadly and locally). Specifics ranged from communication issues to inadequate supplies to inconsistencies. Also participants were often assigned large classes, at-risk students, and multiple preparations. They felt an overwhelming demand on time and energy. Probably the only way this could be addressed by a preparation program would be the inclusion of training on effective time management. However, despite completing a training module on planning, one interviewee said, “It’s physically impossible to do the job as well as it deserves to be done.”

Finally, when asked about their greatest challenge in the initial year of teaching, six of the sixteen named student behavior and classroom management. Both alternative programs offered training in this area, but each was lacking in a particular aspect. Teachers in the NCMTEC program lacked the actual classroom experiences student teaching provided. Teach for America, while providing classroom experience, needed to better prepare participants for the reality of their actual assignment. Increased familiarity and understanding of the assigned area’s culture, observations of local teachers who used effective behavior management techniques, and knowledge of motivational techniques

were suggested ways to strengthen the program. As one TFAer said, “We need to prepare for personal changes we are getting ready to make. What is your life going to be like when you get there?”

Because retaining quality teachers has been a constant struggle for northeastern North Carolina, the study also looked at future educational and career goals for the participants. Only one of the TFA teachers planned to continue teaching. Three expressed an interest in related educational fields, and although still undecided, they named school administration, curriculum writing, tutorials, consulting, and educational policy as possible areas. Of these, one planned on attending law school with future plans to work “on” the system rather than “in” the system. One participant was unsure about remaining in teaching but clearly stated that if he does, it would not be in the same location and probably not in public schools, saying they were “too constrictive.” The other three TFA members did not want to remain in teaching although they all expressed a desire to continue working with or for children. Their reasons for leaving teaching were not student related; instead, they cited unpleasant work environment and the organization and policies of administration as the major drawbacks. Of the participants in the NCMTEC, three planned to continue teaching. One wanted to continue in the field of education but at the central office level in order to “effect change throughout the entire county.” The other four participants were equally divided between unsure and no, naming speech therapy, Christian counseling, and journalism as potential career goals.



## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

There is every reason to think that the results of this study can be generalized and are worth considering when analyzing and evaluating alternative certification for teachers. Although the case study is limited to sixteen teachers in a single county, strengths and weaknesses of two programs of preparation are noted. Teach for America requires an initial investment of \$1000 per recruit from the county, and the individual's commitment is only for two years. Because they are not from the local area, teachers must adjust to the school culture. However, they come with strong verbal and content area backgrounds and an enthusiasm to meet the TFA goal of improving each child's achievement by 2-3 grade levels. They also have intense, although brief, preparation for the classroom including four weeks of 50-minute daily teaching experience. The organization maintains close contact with them and offers some mentoring.

The North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium, though quite different in its construction, also provides a timely and reasonable way to fill needed teaching positions in the county. The participants are familiar with the culture of the area, and several of these teachers are older than college graduate age and come to the classroom with life experiences from other types of employment. The affordability and accessibility enables nontraditional teacher candidates to immediately make this job transition. Partnering with NCMTEC does require some investment on the part of the board of education. The greatest disadvantage of the program is the lack of student teaching experience.

Teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention have proven to be much more complex than anyone, including policymakers, originally thought. Through analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the two programs, certain implications are evident. These apply not only to the programs of training but also to the schools and school systems who employ the alternatively certified teacher and raise broad questions of policy.

With many of the North Carolina colleges and universities training more lateral entry candidates than the number enrolled in their traditional teacher education program, it is reasonable to expect that not only will present alternative pathways continue but also more will be designed. As options for perspective teachers are expanded, high standards must be maintained. It is imperative that these programs provide participants with strong skills in classroom management and with clinical practice to develop effective teacher skills. They should select participants who are content knowledgeable. Because of the grueling schedule and demands of a first-year teacher, one who lacks content knowledge simply does not have enough time or energy to successfully prepare and present quality lessons. Also because not every school or school system does an effective job with the mentoring program, it is recommended that it somehow be tied to the preparation program at least through the initial year of teaching.

The employing schools and school systems also have responsibilities toward the beginning alternatively certified teacher. Strong content knowledge should parallel job placement. When teachers are not placed in their area of strength, are hired at the last minute, are given little assistance, and receive confusing communications from administration and the central office, they begin their careers with frustration and a sense of loss. As these feelings accelerate, teacher burnout is certain to follow. County

specialists in curriculum and instruction need to work with these teachers on familiarizing them with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and providing guidance in planning and pacing. A competent, well-trained, and caring mentor in the teacher's subject area is essential. Novice teachers are eager and even desperate to have someone lend a listening ear and share practical, proven strategies and advice. The investment on training teachers is lost if the system cannot retain them in the classroom.

Working in schools with high percentages of lateral entry teachers peaked my curiosity about the alternative certification process. I observed many of these teachers struggling with classroom challenges, and unfortunately, in some cases failing to provide quality education to their students. I also came to realize the dilemma administrators faced in trying to fill positions with qualified personnel.

The education system has an obligation to provide the best preparation possible to all who are choosing to educate America's children. Although more research is needed concerning which teacher characteristics actually help students learn, the role and the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs are intricately interwoven into teacher quality. Alternative certification must not become a Band-Aid for education, but it does cast a broader net for the purposes of recruitment and training.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: Principal Survey

Please respond with one of the following choices: **SA - Strongly Agree**  
**A - Agree**  
**U - Undecided**  
**D - Disagree**  
**SD - Strongly Disagree**

1. The teacher is knowledgeable in his/her content area(s).	SA	A	U	D	SD
2. Instructional presentation reflects effective planning.	SA	A	U	D	SD
3. The teacher uses correct grammar and communicates clearly.	SA	A	U	D	SD
4. The teacher is challenged by discipline and classroom management.	SA	A	U	D	SD
5. The teacher functions effectively as a member of the school team.	SA	A	U	D	SD
6. The teacher's classroom is student-centered.	SA	A	U	D	SD
7. The teacher utilizes cooperative learning.	SA	A	U	D	SD
8. Classroom instructional strategies reflect a clear understanding of pedagogy.	SA	A	U	D	SD
9. The teacher consistently follows school rules and procedures.	SA	A	U	D	SD
10. The teacher dependably executes extra duties.	SA	A	U	D	SD
11. The teacher has difficulty adjusting to the school culture.	SA	A	U	D	SD
12. The teacher adapts instruction to meet students' different needs.	SA	A	U	D	SD

## Appendix B: Questionnaire for Participating Teachers

Reflecting on the preparation for your initial year of teaching, please respond with one of the following choices: **1 - Very well prepared**

**2 - Moderately well prepared**

**3 - Somewhat well prepared**

**4 - Not at all prepared**

Maintain order and discipline in the classroom	1	2	3	4
Implement a variety of teaching strategies	1	2	3	4
Use appropriate daily and yearly planning	1	2	3	4
Implement NC Standard Course of Study	1	2	3	4
Use student performance assessment techniques	1	2	3	4
Integrate educational technology in the grade you teach	1	2	3	4
Address the needs of diverse students	1	2	3	4
Implement effective planning strategies	1	2	3	4
Maintain paperwork and extra duties	1	2	3	4

## Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participating Teachers

What is your educational background?

Describe your alternate certification program.

What part of the program has proven to be the most beneficial?

What aspects of the program do you recommend being strengthened?

Describe the mentoring support your program provided during your first year of teaching?

What has been the greatest challenge in your initial year of teaching?

What are your educational and career goals?